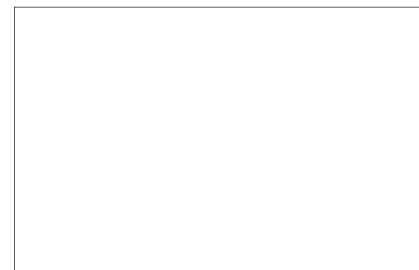
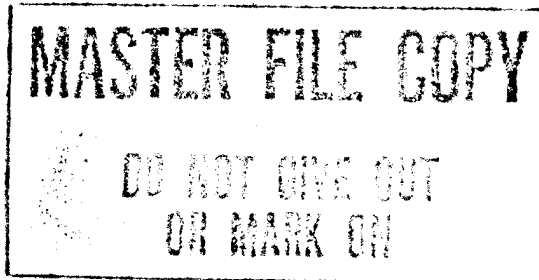




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Near East and South Asia Review



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Articles

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Afghanistan: A Dynamic Stalemate Last Year

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Neither the Soviets and Afghan regime nor the insurgents significantly advanced their military position in 1986, although both sides improved their combat capabilities with new weaponry. Although the insurgents were generally better supplied, resupply was more difficult and costly because of Soviet pressure on logistic routes.

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Some articles are preliminary views of a subject or speculative, but the contents normally will be coordinated as appropriate with other offices within CIA. Occasionally an article will represent the views of a single analyst; these items will be designated as noncoordinated views.

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**Afghanistan: A Dynamic
Stalemate Last Year**

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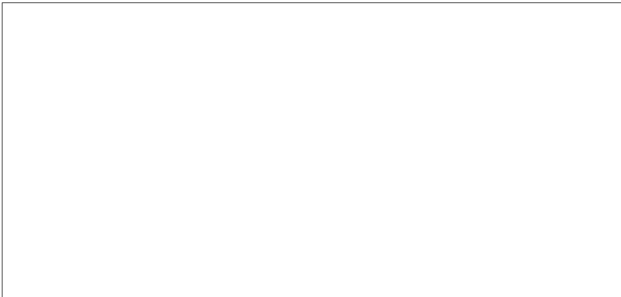
Neither the Soviets and Afghan regime nor the insurgents significantly advanced their military position in 1986, although both sides improved their combat capabilities with new weaponry. Soviet efforts to strengthen the Afghan army met with little success because of continued manpower shortages and factionalism in the senior ranks. Insurgent morale remained high, and many groups adopted new tactics and cooperated regularly on the battlefield. The insurgents were generally better supplied, although resupply was more difficult and costly than in the past because of Soviet pressure on logistic routes. Insurgent morale surged in the fall because of improved air defense capability.

Regime Forces Out Front

Beginning in late 1985 and continuing through the successful siege and destruction of a major insurgent base camp at Zhawar Killi in April, regime forces conducted several major operations with heavy air and artillery support from the Soviets,

In these operations, regime forces showed more ability to operate independently, better unit cohesion, and improved intelligence capability, in our view.

But the heavy fighting, coupled with severe casualties and desertions, seriously damaged Afghan army capabilities. several subsequent large-scale army operations were postponed as a result of manpower shortages.



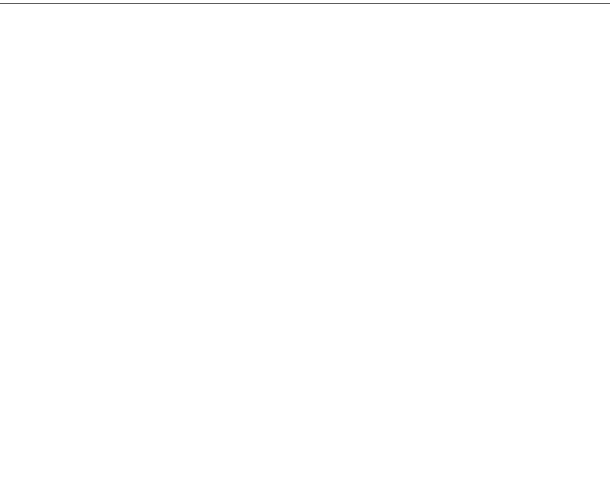
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The Soviets, however, could point to some successes in 1986. They improved defensive perimeters around some of the major cities, particularly Kabul, making it more difficult for insurgents to infiltrate, US Embassy reporting.

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Soviet efforts at interdicting insurgent supply lines through a combination of minefields, outposts, small-unit ambushes, and air attacks made it more difficult for the insurgents to move supplies than in previous years. Still, with some exceptions, the resistance was almost certainly better provisioned at the end of the year than in the past.

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Insurgents Rebound

Insurgent-initiated combat during early 1986 was generally light but escalated sharply by early summer and fall. Almost daily rocket attacks on Kabul, extensive damage to a Soviet ammunition dump at Bagram Airfield, destruction of a regime surface-to-air missile facility in Kabul, and the capture of a battalion-size regime garrison all took place in July and August, according to the US Embassy [redacted]

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[redacted] Beginning in late September, shootdowns of Soviet and regime aircraft by insurgent surface-to-air missiles increased, and in November another Afghan army garrison was overrun. [redacted]

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The Soviets began 1986 with approximately 118,000 to 120,000 troops in Afghanistan. [redacted]

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Outlook

We expect a gradual escalation and intensification of the war in 1987. Insurgent activity probably will significantly increase in the spring against more important regime garrisons because of improved tactical sophistication, increased air defense capabilities, and better weapons and supplies in Afghanistan. The Soviets may introduce additional artillery, combat aircraft, and Spetsnaz to build on last year's successes in interdicting insurgent supply lines and to minimize personnel and equipment losses.

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